

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCE-00 CTME-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01
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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

TO AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

INFO AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

SECSTATE WASHDC 9446

C O N F I D E N T I A L MONROVIA 3797

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PINT, SL, LI

SUBJECT: EFFECT OF ALLEGATIONS OF LIBERIAN ARMS SMUGGLING ON
BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH SIERRA LEONE

REF: (A) FREETOWN 1623 (B) FREETOWN 1498

1. OFFICIAL LIBERIAN COMMENT ON THE SIERRA LEONEAN ON FILING
OF CHARGES AGAINST FIVE LIBERIANS FOR ARMS OFFENSES HAS BEEN
MILD. IN A TELEGRAM TO PRESIDENT STEVENS REPORTED IN
THE SEMI-OFFICIAL LIBERIAN AGE OF MAY 12, PRESIDENT
TOLBERT PROMISED TO AID THE GOSL IN BRINGING FUGITIVE
ARMS SMUGGLERS TO JUSTICE. ACCORDING TO THE AGE, THE
LIBERIAN PRESIDENT NOTED "THAT HE HAD ONLY JUST HEARD
OF THE INCIDENT AFTER IT HAD BEEN GIVEN MUCH PUBLICITY
IN THE PRESS...EVEN BEFORE HE RECEIVED A MESSAGE FROM
SL PRESIDENT." TOLBERT REASSURED THE GOSL THAT LIBERIA
WOULD DO NOTHING TO "IMPAIR OR MAR THE EXCELLENT
RELATIONS SO HAPPILY SUBSISTING BETWEEN THE TWO NATIONS
AND PEOPLES."

2. IN SHARP EDITORIAL MAY 14 (REFTEL A, PARA 1)

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ENTITLED "SIERRA LEONE, ARE YOU SINCERE?", THE SUNDAY
EXPRESS ROUNDLY CONDEMNED THE BBC AND FREETOWN DAILY
MAIL COVERAGE OF THE LIBERIANS' ARREST AND THE LACK OF THE
COURTESY OF PRIOR NOTIFICATION TO THE LIBERIAN GOVERNMENT.
THE GOSL ACTS "CAST DARK CLOUDS OVER THE SO-CALLED
SINCERITY OF THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLE TO COOPERATE FULLY
WITH THEIR LIBERIAN FRIENDS IN THE INTERESTS OF BOTH

COUNTRIES.... WHILE THE BBC WAS BROADCASTING THE NEWS
(OF THE ARRESTS)...THE MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE MANO
RIVER UNION WAS OPENING IN MONROVIA TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS

ON MUTUAL COOPERATION.... WHEN A CLOSE FRIEND GO ALL
OUT AND STAB HIS PARTNER IN THE BACK AND USE THE MASS
MEDIA TO MAKE THAT FRIEND APPEAR TO BE THE SCAPEGOAT
FOR MANY APPARENT REASONS THAT ACT IS CONSIDERED VERY UN-
FRIENDLY, UNKIND AND BAD RELATIONSHIP.... THE ATTITUDE
ON THE PART OF THE SIERRA LEONE AUTHORITIES WAS AN
UNKIND ACT."

3. IN A DISCUSSION WITH AN EMBASSY POLITICAL OFFICER,
MFA OFFICIAL ELBERT DUNN OPINED THAT THE WHOLE INCIDENT
WAS A LOW LEVEL IRRITANT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS. FRESH
FROM COMPOSING A BRIEF PAPER FOR PRESIDENT TOLBERT ON
THIS SUBJECT, DUNN STATED THAT THE LIBERIAN AMBASSADOR
TO FREETOWN REPORTED THE INCIDENT AS MINOR. ALTHOUGH
"SOME PEOPLE IN FREETOWN" WERE TRYING TO CREATE A PROBLEM,
THE LIBERIANS PERCEIVED NO BILATERAL DIFFICULTIES, HE
SAID.

4. IN DEALING WITH THE SPECIFICS OF THE CASE, DUNN
EXPLAINED THAT LIBERIANS LIVING ALONG THE BORDER ARE
FREQUENTLY INVITED BY SIERRA LEONEANS TO COME TO SHOOT
MONKEYS WHICH ARE A PEST. HE FELT THAT THE PROBLEM WAS
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ONE OF A LACK OF PROPER ARMS DOCUMENTATION. DUNN ALSO
NOTED THAT MANY SIERRA LEONEANS PURCHASE SHOTGUN
AMMUNITION (BIRDSHOT) IN LIBERIA DUE TO LACK OF
AVAILABILITY IN SIERRA LEONE.

5. COMMENT: THE GOL'S CONCLUSION THAT THIS INCIDENT
IS OF NO MAGNITUDE IS LARGELY BASED ON THE REPORTS OF
THE LIBERIAN AMBASSADOR IN FREETOWN. WOULD
APPRECIATE ANY COMMENTS BY AMEMBASSY FREETOWN ON THE
DEGREE TO WHICH THE GOSL IS IN FACT SERIOUSLY CONCERNED.
HORAN

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NNN

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